

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

mystical revelation which had been stamped in all the fulness of its seal upon the members of Francis of Assisi one hundred and fifty years before. Fra Raimondo and the others saw her gradually rise up from her prostrate position to her knees, with face all glowing, stretch out her arms, and then, after remaining a while steadfast in this attitude, fall suddenly to the ground as though mortally wounded, "I saw," she said, "the crucified Lord coming down to me in a great light, and for this, by the impetus of the mind that would fain go forth to meet its Creator, the body was constrained to rise. Then from the marks of His most sacred wounds I saw five blood-red rays coming down upon me, which were directed towards the hands and feet and heart of my body. Wherefore, perceiving the mystery, I straightway exclaimed : *Ah> Lord my God, I beseech Thee, let not the marks appear outwardly on my body.* Then, whilst I was yet speaking, before the rays reached me, they changed their blood-red colour to splendour, and in the semblance of pure light they came to the five places of my body, that is, to the hands, the feet, and the heart. So great is the pain that I endure sensibly in all those five places, but especially within my heart, that, unless the Lord works a new miracle, it seems not possible to me that the life of my body can stay with such agony, and that it will not end in a few days."

They brought her back to her room, in what appeared a dying condition. But it seemed that, in answer to the united prayers of all the fellowship, this new miracle was wrought, and when, on the following Sunday, she received the Blessed Sacrament again from Raimondo's hands, her strength was, as it were, supernaturally renewed. "O Father of ineffable mercy," writes the good friar, "what wilt Thou do for Thy faithful servants and for Thy beloved children, when Thou dost show Thyself so benign to such afflicted sinners as us ? I said to her : * Mother, does the pain still last of the wounds which were made in thy

body ?' And
she answered : ° The Lord has heard your prayers,
albeit to the
affliction of my soul, and those wounds not only do not
afflict
my body, but even fortify it; so that, instead of
receiving